WESTMINSTER COURT OF SEWERS.

A SPECIAL court was held on Friday last; Capt. Geo. Bague, R.N., in the chair.

A memorial was presented from the inhabitants of Grove-place, Brompton, setting forth that disease and miasma prevailed in that district, and although there were upwards of seventy houses in the place named, that no sewer existed, and that the only receptacles for the drainage of the houses consisted of cesspools, which were frequently required to be relieved. The matter was referred to the surveyor, as was also a petition from the inhabitants of Earl's-court, Brompton, complaining of the want of drainage.

A communication was received from the vestry-clerk of Hampstead, written by direction of the board of guardians of that parish, complaining of the wretched state of the drainage of West-end, Hampstead, causing the most pernicious consequences to the children in the school-room, and calling for an immediate remedy. The allegations were confirmed by Mr. Law, and other members of the Royal College of Surgeons, as to the unwholesome nature of this district. This communication led to a long discussion, and it was finally referred to the surveyor, to report immediately thereon.

The Powers of the Commission.—A very lengthened discussion arose on the question submitted by a Mr. Carter, of Paddington, to this court. Under the provisions of the new Act, passed for enlarging the powers of this commission, it is required, that before any new house is commenced an efficient drainage shall be constructed, if any public sewer exists within 100 feet of the projected new building; and in this case Mr. Carter wished to know, as he was required to build the sewer past several existing houses, whether he should be enabled to call upon the owners of such property to contribute towards the expenses of the same?

The solicitors to the court gave it as their opinion, that the owners of the existing houses might be called upon to contribute providing the houses had not been erected more than thirty-five years.

Some members of the court having expressed doubts as to whether the construction put by the solicitors on the powers of the Act was a correct one, it was agreed that a case should be prepared and submitted to the Attorney-general, and Mr. Bovill, to ascertain their opinions respectively thereon.

A letter was read from Mr. Farlar, in answer to an application made to him to know what sums had been paid and received by him in reference to the sewer in Alexander-place, Brompton, in which he stated that any questions of this kind were unlawful and uncalled for, and that he refused to answer them. Some discussion ensued upon the subject, and it was resolved, "That the surveyor do report on the contribution per foot to be paid by the occupiers or owners of premises to be drained in the sewer referred to in Mr. Farlar's letter."*

* Mr. Farlar has since forwarded to us the following copy of the communication, with a request that it should be inserted:—

"30, Brompton-square, 22nd October, 1847.

"My lords and gentlemen,—The undersigned having received from your clerk a note inclosing a document (copy of which is hereunto annexed), purporting to be a copy of an order of court, said to have reference to sewer owners' claims, I beg to say I consider so much of the order referring to what sum of sums sewer owners may have expended or received, foreign to the business of the commission, and I refuse to answer the same as unlawful and uncalled for. Permit me to say, your orders of court and bye-laws must be consistent with sense, justice, and the common rights of the subject, or they are not man's desirable.

Your honourable court is directed by the 10th and 11th Vic., c. 76, to arbitrate upon and assess (by true and honest men, agreeable to their oath of qualification, without favour, corruption, or malice, the true value for the fronts of sewers owners may have to convey; and which out loss of time to put into execution the said Act, now bear months old (and nothing done). The said copy of order of court also sets forth, that it is required of sewer owners to present a plan of the entire length of the sewer or sewers to be built by them.

The undersigned claims of the court an explanation of its unconstitutional document. What can claims for sewers already built have to do with those which are 'to be' built?

That your honourable court has great powers (with narrow limitation for retribution to the injured) must be admitted, and in a great measure endorsed.

However absurd the recited order per copy annexed, the undersigned doth (to avoid loss of time) herewith cause to be delivered a plan of the sewer he built (not 'to be' built) in the year 1825. The undersigned also hereby gives notice to your honourable court, should it not forthwith proceed to compel parties to build covered drains, as per section 7 of the said Act, for the premises per his plan delivered to your honourable court, bearing date 10th October inst., he will, on the arrival of the November term, apply, as per counsel he may be advised, to her Majesty's Court of Queen's Bench, to enforce the commission to proceed; him, that returns his property, provided for by the said Act of Parliament. The undersigned begs to remind the board of commissioners, the obtaining the said Act was craved by themselves, and granted as a reprieve, or, in other words, a preservation from total annihilation of your commission, threatened by the bill designated as the Health of Towns' Bill, so introduced into Parliament by Lords Morpeth and Russell.

Your honourable commission having thus obtained new powers, obligatory upon the commissioners as well as the public at the enormous unnecessary expense of more than one of the ratepayers money), have omitted every act for carrying out the said new powers, although the winter is close at hand, and fears prevalent the nation may again be visited by that scourge denominated the cholera. The undersigned, by his address of the 15th inst., gives your court two drafts for the promotion of the requisite steps for carrying out the said new Act, viz., the 10th & 11th Vic., c. 76, as the only measure for preventing the public to aid in forwarding the objects of the Act, and which your court must, however reluctantly, in the end accept.—I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

WM. FARLAR."

The following is a copy of the "order" in question:—

"Resolved, that owners of sewers built within thirty-five years, who shall make application under the new Act for parties to be compelled to lay drains into such sewers, be required to present a plan of the entire length of the sewer or sewers "to be built" by them, shewing the several houses and premises fronting thereon, with the sums already paid for each house from which a drain has been laid, and also shewing the length at frontage, and the amount demanded for laying a drain from each of those houses from which they desire that a drain should be now laid into the sewers so built by them."

After the above was in type, we received from Mr. Farlar, too late for insertion (even if we could afford space), other papers, and a letter, complaining of our having headed our report, "Illegal Conduct of a Commissioner." The report in question professes to be nothing more than a record of the proceedings of the court, and the court pronounced the conduct illegal.

Improvement of the Drainage of Westminster.—The court then proceeded to consider the surveyor's report on the improvement of the drainage of the parishes of St. Margaret and St. John, Westminster, with the government offices, in Downing-street, &c. This document appeared in THE BUILDER, *in extenso*, some weeks since,* when the report and plans in reference thereto, were ordered to be submitted to her Majesty's Commissioners of Woods and Forests, to which the following answer has been received:—

"Office of Woods and Forests,
Oct. 20, 1847.

"With reference to my letter of the 17th inst., stating that the Commissioners of Woods and Forests had not been able to come to any decision, in regard to the sewer proposed to be built by the Court of Sewers for Westminster through Parliament-street, with an outlet to the Thames at Richmond-terrace, in consequence of Mr. Lomax, the surveyor empowered by them to report thereon, having been prevented from doing so so fully as he wished,—not having seen detailed plans and specifications for the intended sewer,—I have to report on the part of the board, that he further states, that he has inspected the plans and received such explanations as he required from you and from Mr. Phillips in regard thereto, the result of which has been, in some degree, to remove the objections, stated in his former report, to the construction of the sewer in the line and in the manner shewn by the plan and printed report, which accompanies your letter of the 8th inst.; but that he is still of opinion that the new sewer should be carried on to Whitehall, for the purpose of improving the drainage of Whitehall (which is very defective), of the government offices and houses in Whitehall and its vicinity. This opinion Mr. Lomax states that he communicated to you, but that it was proposed to remedy this defective drainage above-mentioned by the construction of such branch sewers along Whitehall as should be necessary, the expense of which would be much less than continuing the new main sewer as suggested by him, and the remedy equally efficient. Under these circumstances the board would not feel themselves justified in giving their sanction to the projected sewer until they shall have laid before them plans of the branch sewers proposed to be formed in Whitehall, and be informed when it may be expected the same will be constructed. I have also to state that, as the board have some doubt whether or not the thickness of one brick, as proposed by Mr. Phillips, is sufficient for a sewer of the size and extent of that now proposed, they have thought it right to consult Capt. Vetch upon that point, but that before giving an opinion on the subject, he has expressed a wish to see a longitudinal section of the ground, shewing the position of the drain in regard to the surface and nature of the soil as far as ascertained, and also to know if the whole of the brickwork (or what portion) is to be laid in cement; whether the bottom is intended to be laid on blocks, and the method proposed for laying bricks throughout? and, likewise, whether it is expected that the sewer will ever be subject to a pressure of water on the soffit of the arch? and I have to request that you will move the court of sewers to furnish the board with information on these points.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"CHARLES GORE."

Mr. Harrison thought, that in thus applying to the Woods and Forests they had acted unwisely, and that it was not a dignified course for them to have pursued.

Mr. Willoughby said, that in consulting the Board of Woods and Forests as a public body, this court believed they had a common interest in the matter, but the drainage of Whitehall he conceived to have nothing whatever to do with the case. The communication they had thought proper to make to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, was for the information of that board rather than an acknowledgment of any control they might have in the question.

The surveyor said he had subsequently given great attention to the subject, and had with the clerk gone over the whole of the ground again, and he had seen nothing to alter his opinion of the propriety of the course he then proposed.

After a few observations from other commissioners, it was proposed and carried unanimously, that the clerk do communicate to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, that this court will proceed with the plans as laid down by their surveyor; and that the drainage of Whitehall will be a subject for separate consideration.

* See p. 480, ante.

New Books.

Observations on Limes, Calcareous Cements, Mortars, &c. By Major General Sir C. PASLEY. Second Edition: Part I. Weale; 1847.

A SECOND edition of this valuable work has been required for some years past, but the author was unable to give time to a revision of it till lately. He has now issued a first part only, but promises the completion in a few months. Since the publication of the work, artificial cements have been made and used extensively, so as to justify the opinion General Pasley had advanced in this respect.

We shall hope to find some few alterations in the appendix of the present edition. The author has experienced more ill-natured abuse himself since he wrote it than he had before, (much of it uncalled for, and not to be justified), and may feel anxious to avoid paining others.

We recommend the work to the study of all engaged in construction to whom it may still be unknown.

Correspondence.

ORIENTATION OF CHURCHES.

DEAR SIR,—Your correspondent of the 4th, "A Churchman," has himself *singularly overlooked* the Rubric, part of which he quotes, as it is ordered that "the table shall stand in the body of the church, or in the chancel, where morning and evening prayers are appointed to be said." I presumed every ecclesiologist was aware that this Rubric was framed to meet the want of what you term "orientation" (or what is better known in the country as "east-and-westing") in the parish churches of our happily Protestant island, as the priest can invariably comply with the whole of the Rubric, when attention to a part might seem to involve an inconvenience.

In many cases it would be much better to have disregarded this symbolism, as nothing is more painful than to enter at the chancel end of a church and to proceed down an aisle to a seat, meeting so many strangers' eyes.

Pardon the intrusion of a female upon the valuable columns of THE BUILDER, and believe that I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A CHURCHWOMAN.

Day of the Feast of St. Luke, 1847.

DISTRICT SURVEYORS' FEES.

SIR,—Allow me to correct what I consider to be an error in your last week's publication. It is simply as to the proper position of an apostrophe, in the following sentence:—"District surveyors' fees,—a pretty specimen." This clearly implies that the specimen is one of a class, which I deny; but place the apostrophe *before* the s, and the specimen becomes that of an individual, which I admit,—and sorry I am to do so.

Before the account in question appeared in your paper, it had been examined specially and condemned universally by the body of district surveyors; and after the expression of their decided opinion on the subject, I have reason to believe that such unfounded claims, alleged to have been made through error, will in future be relinquished.—I am, Sir, &c.

Oct. 25, 1847. AN OLD D.S.

TREATMENT OF BUILDERS—ESTIMATES.

SIR,—Not the least among the many annoyances to which respectable tradesmen engaged in the building and repairing of houses are subject, is the one arising out of the practice of persons, requiring the smallest repair or renovation to interior or exterior of their house, calling upon them to furnish an estimate of the expense (without any intimation of a competition), with no other view but to arrive at such knowledge as may enable them to seek different tradesmen, and by tempting them with the assurance that such and such a one has offered to do it very low, induce some unfortunate to take it at a profitless price under the vain hope of future employ. I would advise every man who may discover that his judgment and time have been thus made use of, to charge for his estimate, and thus put a check upon such unprincipled conduct.—I am, Sir, &c., A SUFFERER.

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